

## **GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

INTERVIEWEE: Lewis Dowdy

INTERVIEWER: Eugene E. Pfaff, Jr.

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EUGENE PFAFF: --interviewee today is Lewis [C.] Dowdy, chancellor of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University [A&T]. Born in Richland County, South Carolina, Dr. Dowdy graduated cum laude from Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina. He received a Master of Arts in Administration and a doctorate in education from Indiana State University.

He became the Director of Student Teaching at A&T in 1951, then Dean of the School of Education, Dean of Instruction and acting President in 1961. Dr. Dowdy was appointed the sixth president of A&T in 1964 and was named chancellor when the institution became part of the North Carolina State University system in 1967.

Dr. Dowdy was elected president of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges in 1973, the first black educator to head a major higher educational association in the United States. He received the Outstanding Alumnus award from Indiana State University and the Citizens of Greensboro award from the Chamber of Commerce. He also served on a number of governmental and professional boards.

I'd like to welcome you to our program today, Dr. Dowdy.

LEWIS DOWDY: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here.

EP: I'd like to begin our discussion today, if I might, in asking you what childhood experiences influenced you to become an educator.

LD: Well, actually, my childhood experiences really started me out on a desire to be in business rather than in education. My father ran a rather extensive farm, a little over a thousand acres, and I worked very closely with him in terms of taking care of the finances, paying off and that type of thing.

And I was interested at that time in probably a chain of grocery stores. And, of course, that was during my high school days. Then when I got into college, the desire shifted somewhat to higher education. I guess I was motivated by some of my teachers, especially in philosophy and psychology. And I wanted to go into that direction.

EP: Could you describe the circumstances under which you became a faculty member and an administrator at A&T?

LD: Yes. I completed my master's degree at Indiana State in the summer of 1949, I believe. And then I decided to make some applications to colleges and universities, because I was interested, as I indicated before, in college teaching.

And the summer of 1951, I believe it was, that I received three offers, one at Texas Southern and one at Florida A&M and one at North Carolina A&T. And I had to immediately decide which one I wanted to pick. And then I decided to take the one in North Carolina, because I had heard so much about North Carolina. [clears throat] So I wrote back and said I would take the one in North Carolina and came to A&T in September 1951 as Director of Student Teaching, and, of course, Instructor of Education. And that was my first job at A&T.

EP: Well, A&T has been important to black education throughout its history. What was its original philosophy of education and goals?

LD: Well, A&T's philosophy and goals stem from the first and second Morrill Act of 1862 and 1891. However, the second--sorry, 1890. The second Morrill Act was the one that brought A&T into existence. The first Morrill Act of 1862 provided money from the sale of lands to establish state institutions in the states.

In 1890, the second Morrill Act was passed, which provided funds for the continuation and support of the academic program. But there was a stipulation in that bill that where there were discrimination of races, that funds would have to be divided between a school which black students could attend. And they could not receive the appropriation in North Carolina or any of the other southern states until they did this.

So in March the ninth, 1891, the governor came to the General Assembly and encouraged the General Assembly to pass a resolution establishing A&T State University. And then it was a question as to where it would be located. And the people in Greensboro raised eleven thousand dollars and provided several acres of land, and they got the bid for A&T to come to Greensboro, North Carolina.

EP: Has it changed its emphasis from its inception as a land grant college?

LD: No, I wouldn't say so. We are probably fulfilling our purpose more fully now than we did in the earlier days, because in the earlier days, there wasn't the opportunities for students in the areas which are emphasized-- agriculture, engineering, technology--but the bill specifically states "not to the exclusion of the liberal arts." So consequently, we have the liberal arts, also.

But the land grant philosophy is that while people do a lot of research, the research that is supposed to be done in the land grant institution is the application of the methodology, discovering research to the farmers and to technology so that the society itself might benefit, and not just to do pure research--that is, research for research sake.

But how do you, how do you increase the yield of corn per acre? How do you increase the yield of tobacco per acre? And how do you actually speed up the growth of pine seedlings so that you can replenish the furniture that we need in this country, or hardwood, and that type of thing?

EP: Well, this would get into the area of not only the philosophy of education at A&T, but also your own personal philosophy. And Carrye Hill Kelley in *Profiles of Five Administrators*, which is a history of five administrators at A&T, states that, "Of great importance to a college president's success is the predetermined philosophy of education." What is your philosophy of education?

LD: Well, my philosophy of education is that education is a creature of society that was created by society to train the young of that society in the ways of that society as early as possible, so that they can make a contribution and improve upon that society. So the school or the college itself or university is an agency created by society, because society itself could not, in families, educate students to the extent that they could contribute in a sophisticated society.

So education itself is supposed to have as a basic purpose the elevation of man in the quality of life. And that would come in terms of better ways of doing things to make living easier but also in terms of the arts and humanities, in terms of appreciation of the arts and humanities better. So consequently, no education is complete unless you're going to cover most of the fields of education. And an individual ought to have that.

So my feeling is that in a democratic society, it is necessary for persons to have as much education as possible and that it should be turned loose, and it should not be held back from the people in a society.

I do not agree with the philosophy of the educational system in England, for instance, where they decide at an early time that you will go into this track, and the others will go in this track. In other words, only those few who pass certain examinations can go to the university. I think that people ought to be given a chance. And no one knows what motivates an individual. And I've seen it happen at A&T and other schools, too. So consequently, I think that the educational system in the United States ought to be a democratic one, following the philosophy of the society.

EP: During the mid-1960s, you were quoted as advocating a quest for quality, in which you stressed, among other things, upgrading entrance requirements and criteria for hiring

faculty members, summer school for selected high school seniors, and upgrading the recruitment program in the high schools. How well has this program succeeded?

LD: Well, it succeeded very well. In addition to what I said at that time, I wanted to strive for national accreditation in the areas in which we could achieve national accreditation. And I think that our student body is now--has much more quality than it had at the time I made that statement.

And we have now achieved national accreditation in all of the areas in which we could achieve national accreditation. That is, where they had a national body that could provide national accreditation--with the exception of one, and that is the School of Business and Economics. And we expect a visit next November, November 1977, with a team from the American Council [sic-Assembly] of Collegiate Schools of Business to visit our campus and to evaluate our program. If we can get that done, then we'll have all of our programs nationally accredited.

And we have done quite a bit in terms of upgrading the quality of our faculty, strength of our faculty, by sending faculty members back to school in certain areas in which we were weak. So, we have passed the 50 percent PhD level. In some departments we have as much as 75 percent PhDs. In the physics department we have a 100 percent PhDs in that department. So we're still growing and still working on these areas of quality: bringing in better students, trying to upgrade the faculty, and trying to keep the program relative to the needs of our society.

EP: Well, I think it'd be well at this point for me to point out that since you have become president and chancellor, the School of Education has been established, and accreditation has been granted to the School of Nursing, the Department of Chemistry, the School of Engineering, and the Department of Sociology and the Social Services. So, I gather that you regard this as very successful.

LD: Very successful. And when we get--if we get the School of Business accredited we will have what I call a complete university in terms of accreditation.

We were not satisfied with regional accreditation, in that that only touches on the southern region; we were interested in finding the highest possible quality for our students because the mobility of our population now means that a young man or young woman may find themselves in California after graduation or Massachusetts or anywhere else. And consequently, we are preparing people for the whole of our society, not to take their place just in one geographical segment of our society.

EP: Does the fact that UNCG [University of North Carolina at Greensboro] is in the same city [as A&T] present any problems regarding the competition for funds from the state?

LD: Well, I don't think so. We have a different purpose altogether in terms of our goals at A&T State University. We emphasize, as I indicated before, the basic courses in agriculture and engineering, and we are trying to add on to our engineering program.

We have a four-year program in four or five fields of technology, which is catching on quite a bit. We have a BS now in transportation. We have programs in mentor training. And even our School of Business will request courses in industrial management, which is going to be connected with the work that we're doing in the Division of Technology and the School of Engineering. So the thrust of our program is quite different from the thrust of the program at UNCG, with the exception of the liberal arts.

And, of course, we have discussed this with committees from UNCG and A&T. And we've decided to come to the agreement that UNCG couldn't teach all of our students in English or in the arts that we have. We couldn't do likewise with them. So consequently, we are carrying, somewhat like North Carolina State [University] is doing, sufficient programs to augment the major programs that we have.

I think that the search for funds for our institutions, including A&T, perhaps the shortage of funds has been due to the economic pinch, I believe, plus the fact that North Carolina tried to establish some fifty-four community colleges and technical institutes, and that's taken quite a bit of money, too.

And I'm not talking against the institutions. They're very good institutions. They fill a gap that we have had for a long time in our system of higher education. And I served on the Committee on Education Beyond the High School in the state, in which we made recommendations for the establishment of these institutions.

But what I'm saying is that North Carolina doesn't have but so many dollars. And as you increase the number of schools, then you increase the scarcity or the difficulty in trying to provide ample funds for all the schools that are therein. It is hoped that as the economy improves, that then the funding of the institutions will be more fully met.

EP: This would suggest a certain complement of goals and areas of responsibility between A&T and UNCG. And this leads me to ask about the success of the cooperation amongst the various institutions here in Greensboro with the Greensboro Regional Consortium [A&T, UNCG, Bennett College, Guilford College, High Point University]. What things have been accomplished, and in your opinion what things need still to be done?

LD: Well, I think the programs that we have now in cooperation with UNCG and the other institutions have been successful. However, I think we have just touched the tip of the iceberg. I think that what we could do is do much more than what we are doing now. But meetings are going on now.

We had a meeting last week on inter-institutional cooperation with Dr. Rankin and others from various schools in the area. And several other things are being done, that

is, in the purchase of sophisticated equipment which is used in science and engineering and areas of that nature. I think that we could save some funds by deciding where it should be put and that it could be utilized by both campuses or all the campuses in the area. And in addition to that, I think that some kind of transportation system is going to have to be developed in order to increase the number of students who are taking advantage of the various courses that we are offering.

I think, also, that a combination of strength in the colleges in Greensboro, we could offer some brand new programs at the master's level, and perhaps at the PhD level that no one campus could offer, but the five campuses together, drawing upon the strength of these five campuses, could offer some programs in the Greensboro area which would be quite useful to the citizens here.

And the area of research, I think that we have yet to have the companionship of research being done by teams of professors from the various institutions getting together, working on a single project. And I think that's a way.

In addition to that, I think that we could employ faculty members who would teach part-time on one campus, part-time on another campus, meaning that we could provide more funds--could get higher and higher qualified faculty members to do this. And that is being done some now. But then the exchange of professors, also--and that is, you teach on our campuses this semester, next semester on the other campus. It would be much easier to move the professor around than it would be to move several students.

So, there are several things that we could do in the area of cultural entertainment. I think our campuses could get together and form these and bring highly interesting and productive cultural entertainments to our campuses and perhaps have some out at the [Greensboro] Coliseum Auditorium and other places where many of us could take part. Or lecturers or artists could come and then service all of the campuses by paying him out of one standard budget that had been developed by the five schools. So, there are so many things that we could do together, I think, to enrich our programs, to raise the quality of our programs.

EP: Is there anything that is providing problems in this area or difficulty of moving ahead in these areas you've just outlined?

LD: I don't think so, other than for the transportation; there would be some funds necessary to provide the transportation, shuttle buses and that kind of thing. But, as you know, colleges and universities are rather traditional in terms of change. And this may stand in our way more than anything else, the rigid kind of classification, promotions, tenure. In other words, a professor's working at two places, and where would he get his tenure? A lot of questions have come up like that. If you're taking courses one place and the other, then who's going to grant the degree?

So I think that after the professors talk quite a bit—a faculty talk--then these things will be ironed out. So it's not as easy as it seems on the surface, but they're talking and they're moving ahead. And I think that things will be worked out.

EP: Nineteen sixty-three marked a period of increasing reverse integration, if we can use that term, at A&T. And I'd like to know, what is the trend amongst predominantly black educational institutions? Are they seeking to maintain their identity as such, or are there significantly large numbers of white students attending these institutions?

LD: Well, we're trying to increase what we call the minority population on our campus. Not only because it is a mandate by Health, Education and Welfare [Dept.], but because we think it's a very healthy thing. And that is that a mix of our population would more nearly reflect the real world in which we live--our society in which we live.

The students who graduate are going to have to compete for jobs on the same level wherever they go. And not only that, but we also open up a new opportunity for students in the Guilford County area and region six for getting the kind of education they want.

If they want engineering, well, we have it for you. And a day student can go for 562 dollars a year and get an engineering degree for what it takes to go to some schools--they, they can finance themselves for four years for what it takes to go for only one year at another school. And this likewise is true for all the other programs that we have. So, we provide a new opportunity for students coming into A&T--that is, the white students. And the other colleges provide new opportunities for the black students--courses we don't offer, you see.

So we feel that we ought to encourage--and we have been encouraging--minority participation and improvement in enrollment. We have a white recruiter on our staff of recruiters for the admissions office. He's been working very well in increasing it. I think we have approximately 9 percent white students on campus now, and we hope we can improve that and increase it at least up to 20 percent.

EP: You mentioned the graduates of A&T. Are they staying in the Greensboro or Guilford area? Are they finding employment in Greensboro and in North Carolina?

LD: Yes, much more now than, than before. You see, there was a time when our first--when our students graduated in engineering, they had to go out of state to get jobs. And that's why we find now a whole lot of our graduates are sending their daughters and sons back to A&T, because they live in the Washington area and the Philadelphia area, New Jersey, Oregon, Ohio and California, Colorado, as the case might be. It's where they went--had to go to get jobs.

Now we're not, not doing it as well as we'd like to do, because the students who graduate from our school come from mostly low-income families. And they have promised themselves that they're going to help the other, younger child to go to college. So consequently, they have to take the best possible salary they get. And a lot of times the opportunities and offers that come from North Carolina are outbid by industry outside of the state of North Carolina.

I can't blame them for taking that, because in a lot of cases they're the first person from their family to graduate from college. And they have a commitment back there to send brother and sisters. So in time this is going to change, and they're going to see that staying in North Carolina perhaps has some advantages to it.

EP: I'd like to discuss with you the circumstances under which A&T was granted university status in 1967. Could you outline how that occurred?

LD: Well, as I see it, in 1967, East Carolina [University], through some of the legislators, made a bid for university status. And when I was informed later, there were two institutions, I believe, added; that was West[ern] Carolina [University] and Appalachian [State University]. And reading the criteria in terms of how many graduate programs you had to have to qualify and some of the others, I saw that A&T qualified. So then I proceeded, through our legislator for Guilford County, to have A&T's name inserted and added to the list.

And, of course, that brought about a lot of discussion and debate. But we persisted and continued to say that we were qualified and provided the data necessary. And after several discussions and all, we were voted in. I think the four institutions were made universities at the time.

And, of course, there were several things which assisted us, and that was a call for division of the House [of Representatives in the North Carolina General Assembly], I believe they called it, in which each person had to record their vote. And not by voice vote, so they couldn't see who was voting for what. And, of course, our graduates went down on that Monday, and they were in the gallery watching and taking tabs of who was voting for what. And we were voted in by a good margin.

EP: Could you characterize the nature of the debate in the General Assembly? I know two of the principal legislators involved were L.P. McLendon and Robert Morgan.

LD: I would not like to undertake that, because I wasn't there at the time. The only thing I could recount was what was in the newspaper. I have those clippings at home. But if the newspaper account is correct, it was quite interesting. I would just leave it with the newspaper account.



EP: Well, there was some suggestion at that time that it might have been premature at that time, at that stage of A&T's development. Did you feel that that was the case or--

LD: No, I did not. I felt that all of us were premature, that is, including East Carolina, West Carolina and Appalachian. But if they were going on with it, then I knew that A&T had the quality of programs and the number of programs necessary to qualify with the criteria that they had at the time. And if they're going to make the others universities, then I thought A&T should be made a university. And that was the basis upon which we proceeded.

EP: I think we've discussed a number of the positive results of doing that. Have there been any negative results or anything that--any event that might have perhaps been put off till later at A&T's development or--

LD: You mean because of the--

EP: University status.

LD: No. I can't, I can't think of any. Maybe I'm just not analyzing the situation as keenly as I should, but I don't recall any whatsoever. Because the next meeting of the General Assembly--they made all the universities, if I'm not mistaken, all the campuses universities, you see, as you have them now.

EP: Another significant area that A&T has been involved in has been the civil rights movement. A&T was brought to national attention during the Woolworth sit-in demonstrations in 1960, and then again in 1963 there were further demonstrations. How is this manifested at A&T, and what was its effect on the institution?

LD: Well, let me say first to your question that whereas some people say A&T was brought to the national attention because of the sit-ins. You know, it'd be better if anybody would say that segregation and the rights of man was brought into full focus because of the demonstrations. It wasn't so much A&T, but it was what America was doing to a certain segment of the population. I think that's more important than trying to put forth A&T as a, as a, a revolutionary kind of institution. Of course, if you want to call it revolutionary, it was, because all the students at A&T were trying to do was get the citizens to live up to the responsibility and the tenets of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution we had, so--just depends on how you think about it. Now--

[End Tape 1, Side A--Begin Tape 1, Side B]

LD: I guess you want me to talk about the demonstrations themselves. In 1960, when they first started the sit-ins, I was not president, but I did observe them and was involved some. But [by] 1963, I was acting president at the time, and the demonstrations were at the restaurants in Greensboro.

And at one time, I believe, there were over twelve hundred students in jail. Of course, they had to use temporary quarters to take care of these people. And we went out and took the school physician, nurses, and a minister. And mainly to take care of those persons who had certain kinds of ailments--we had several asthma patients out there who had to have some help. And the minister went around to the groups to talk to them.

And then after that, the governor [Terry Sanford] got with the judge, I believe, and they had an order which freed all of the students from the jail. They called me and asked me to go out and get them. That was about one o'clock at night, I believe. And when I went out to the jail to get them, why, they didn't want to leave at all. And I had to go in and tell them that I wasn't the one that was freeing them from the jail, but it was an order of the governor and the judge. And finally, we got them to come back.

And of course, we opened the dining hall--it must have been three or three-thirty in the morning--to fix breakfast for them and all. And they went to the dormitories and, of course, came back and went to class. And that didn't stop at all, because they went right on back uptown to gain what they were trying to get in the first place.

EP: Do you recall some of the events or the individuals that aided in the cooperative effort between the university and the community, particularly the business communities, to resolve the differences?

LD: Yes. But actually this is very difficult, because you leave out some names, some of the names, and people will be hurt by this.

But Dr. George Evans was one I'm sure that met with the students and met with the merchants. And I'm sure Dr. George Simkins was another one that met with these. And Reverend [Cecil] Bishop, who was here at the time, a minister of one of the churches here, Methodist church, was quite instrumental in this movement, also. Reverend [Otis L.] Hairston, I'm sure he was in it, too.

On our campus, Reverend Coy was instrumental in getting these groups together and all. Mr. Ed Zane, I believe, met with some groups during this period or the former period. And the mayor of the city [David Schenck] was involved, also. So there were several people, and some members of the [Greensboro] City Council at that time, that I can't recall at this time. But those are some of the main characters who assisted in trying to bring this to a successful ending.

And Jesse Jackson, of course, came in 1963. But prior to Jesse Jackson, there was William Thomas, a young man who really got the thing going in terms of the

demonstrations, starting with McDonald's on Summit Avenue, and then went uptown. And, of course, at the close of it was when Jesse Jackson took over and started the full-fledged demonstrations of 1963.

EP: What specific things--

LD: Oh, I should mention Ezell Blair [Jr., now known as Jibreel Khazan], who was here at the time. You know, Ezell Blair was one of the four young men that started the sit-ins in 1960. And, of course, he was here in 1963 and was a quite a figure in that demonstration also.

EP: Was this planned as a coordinated plan, or did events just more or less transpire and in a snowballing effect, so to speak?

LD: I don't know. It would be hard for anybody to tell that. Even the leaders I don't think could tell you whether it was planned or not. I think they planned certain things, certain nights from day to day and that type of thing. But the crescendo in which it increased, I don't know if they had any control over it or knew when it was going to happen or anything of that nature. It just depended upon the situation and how things progressed.

EP: I think the entire country was impressed by the nonviolent nature of the demonstrations and the fact that this more or less started nationwide sit-in demonstrations, other types of bus rides into the Deep South, the voter registration drives. Was there a particular sense of pride at A&T for having been a pioneer or in the forefront of this movement?

LD: Yes, I think so. I think the students still pass this down from one generation of class to another. And they still talk about it. And I think they feel proud of the fact that they have assisted Americans to fulfill at least one or two of the dreams of America. And if we can continue to do this all over the country, then we'll have the kind of country that we wanted all the time. And they feel that they were part of a process which was necessary at the time. It's unfortunate that all of these things had to happen to get these things into law and activated, but it had to be done.

EP: I'd like to turn now back to, perhaps, the philosophy of education at A&T. In a newspaper article in 1967, you were quoted as saying of education that, "It is a continuous incessant voyage which must go on, but it takes courage against the strong winds of discouragement, pessimism and sometimes even fear." In terms of A&T, what are the discouragements, pessimisms and fears?

LD: Okay. Well, some of the things I would say would probably be applicable to almost any institution. But for a long time, if you read the history, you find out that we were not funded properly as other schools were funded. Which is discouragement, I think, because if you ask me to do a job that's the same thing as somebody else is doing, and you don't give me the tools or the money to do it with, and yet you expect me to produce as well as the other person produced, it can't be anything but discouraging.

I must say that since the Board of Governors was organized, however, and Dr. [William] Friday took over, that we are receiving equity now in terms of funding. However, a sudden burst of equity does not necessarily eradicate the imbalance that you had in the former years. It's almost like telling a person who has had a very low salary for a long time that I'm going to give you the same salary that your colleague is making now, and yet over a period of twenty-five years, he's been able to stack up all kind of bank accounts and pay for his home and everything else. You just can't catch up with that kind of thing unless you increase him beyond, you see.

And then, of course, the other part of discouragement was not recognizing what contributions black students have made to life in America. That's all the contributions of adults who have made strides in education and science and technology--the leaders and all.

The other part, I think, deals with the education itself. And that is, getting certain changes made in the curriculum and getting people to accept what you would like to do. In other words, as I indicated to you before, our students should have the same kind of education that anybody else has. And, of course, if you can't get a chance to offer these programs, although you--your school has that purpose within its purview, horizontally and vertically, then you can't prepare them to take their places in society as they should. So the constriction of your curriculum by not approving programs that you request is another casualty.

And, of course, back in the unequal funding, then the unequal funding restricts the quality of faculty you can get. So that was quite an upsetting kind of thing, because other people were buying faculty members off. We couldn't--we couldn't do it. Our salaries are still not equal as they should be, and we're making some attempts to get them equal. But it's part of the discouragement there.

And, of course, then the whole business of the separate but equal public schools come into [the] fore. The time when I said that--you see the way I figure, it takes twelve years for a person to go through an integrated setup or equal funding situation in order to feel it. Some people think, of course, when you go into high school, they're four years out. And, of course, you ought to make the same kind of grades others ought to make in college.

But with equal funding beginning at the, at the high school level, then what about the seven or eight years that you didn't have equal funding and didn't have equal supplies

and materials, you didn't have the quality teachers, and you had more students in the classes than others had and all. So I have to give myself twelve years, you see.

And if you take the 1954 [*Brown v. Board of Education*] decision and move up to when they really started this, about 1957--[In] '67, we had not received our first graduate that had come all the way through the integrated setup, you see. And the despair there was based upon the fact that we had to take students who were not prepared, [and] prepare them in four years to compete with students who were prepared and had more facilities, more equipment to deal with, and higher quality teachers. But somehow we came through that and did it, you see. I must say that since 1967 there is not as much discouragement, not as much despair now.

And, of course, trying to get people to see that traditional education is no longer the kind of education we ought to have--trying to weigh the needs of society and come up with new programs that will fit students for today's world, for, you know, tomorrow's world, which is really what, what I'm talking about.

So some of those are internal discussions and arguments that we would have in terms of philosophical commitment and directions that the higher education ought to take, you see.

EP: Well, in the course of your tenure at A&T, could you characterize how education has changed here in Greensboro or Guilford County or on the state level--any of those levels you'd like to discuss--education in general, and black education in particular?

LD: Well, I may be debated on this, but I think education has improved greatly, both at the public school level and at the higher education level. I think that changes have been made in the curriculum; more is being taught now than ever before. There is more known knowledge now than we ever had before, so consequently, students have to have solved more than they have in the past.

The traditional curriculum has changed greatly, and newer programs are coming to the forefront. I think this has been brought on by the new changes which have taken place in our society for the people. The computer, for instance, has changed a whole lot in our society. It's, it's taken over quite a bit the ways of doing things.

And in electrical engineering, for instance, no student can go through there without taking computer science. Computer science is in sociology now. Computer science is in business and economics. It's in just about everything--political science--if you want to do research.

I think more emphasis now is being placed upon the career-oriented part of education, not to the exclusion, however, of so-called basic general education. So many students have been educated--did not have anything to do. Didn't--did not have a vocation or career path to take.

I think, also, schools and colleges now are opening much more opportunities for adults to come back into school and start work on some degrees and, and skills that they would like to develop than before. We had been looking at the eighteen, nineteen-year old coming in. But now we have people coming in from various and sundry backgrounds and ages, you see. That is, the process of that education never ceased, it's a continuous process. And that in the lifetime of an individual, that they must be retrained perhaps three times. So consequently, they continue to retrain themselves so that they can continue to work and make a contribution to society.

But in the Greensboro area, I would say that those are the changes that I see, that you have much more programs now to--very attractive to the adult population. And when I say adult population, I'm not talking about the very old--starting with the person who may not have had an opportunity to go to high school, and they had to raise a family and now they want to come back. I would consider that the adult population of students--or persons who are making a change in midstream. They're forty years old, forty-five years old, and now they want to start to do something else, you see. So I think those are the changes I would point out.

EP: Well, you've been characterized as a dynamic educator and a maverick liberal in the educational profession who has often been willing to part with tradition. And, as a result, many of your efforts have resulted in progressive changes in black education. What personal goals do you have for A&T? And how can A&T make a contribution to the community?

LD: Well, my personal goals for A&T is to have a complete program in all the areas that we presently approved, to raise the standard and the quality in all of these programs, as I indicated before, not only to the accreditation standard, but to the standards we set for ourselves. Then I'd like to see an evaluation of these programs take place frequently, so that whatever change needs to come, these changes will take place so that there would not be static programs and that they will stay there too long. So I hope that A&T can serve region six in the area of their needs in technology, in engineering, in agriculture, in business and economics, and in many other areas that we have at the institution.

As a matter of fact, the increases in this area, then the desire and the need for more highly technical trained people will come about. And that's increasing daily now as, as you see it. So we are trying to gear up our forces so that we are ready at all times to provide the manpower necessary to continue the Piedmont in this vein. So we're asking for new programs now, sending the programs down to the Board of Governors to be approved, so we can meet whatever demands that are going to come with the onslaught of more industry and manufacturing industry in the Piedmont area.

So we would not be looked upon as a black college. We would be looked upon as a university serving the citizens, all citizens in the Piedmont area, in the areas I've just

mentioned, plus other areas that we have there. And I think that's a main goal that we must have.

As I indicated at the beginning of this talk, that the colleges and universities is an agent to society, and A&T does not belong to me or the faculty members. It belongs to the taxpayers. And the taxpayers can get their money's worth by utilizing the facilities at A&T.

We hope that through our research--which is going on now--we have some five million dollars worth of research going on--that we would open new doors to do things better, to raise the quality of life.

As you indicated, if you saw, we dedicated a laboratory in solid state electronics, in which we're trying to find new sources of energy from the sun. And that is converting the solar energy directly into electric, electricity so it can light homes and run refrigerators and do the things that are necessary to do, and you won't have to worry about the oil situation so much. And we have certain other research going on on our farm--pollution programs, environmental problems.

Small farmers, low-income farmers--we're trying to raise the level of those in about twenty-seven counties in North Carolina. So through the extension work at A&T, we're trying to work on these things. So there's a whole lot to do in the area, and I think that our institution is the one that can assist in this area. We have our goals all set. And our parameters in terms of our horizontal/vertical purposes will not interfere with the other institutions who are here.

EP: Well, I think that you clearly demonstrated how A&T has made an important contribution to the community in general, education community, and in particular, black education. And I want to thank you very much for being a participant in our oral history program, Dr. Dowdy.

LD: Well, thank you very much. I've enjoyed it.

EP: Thank you. This program was filmed in the Greensboro Public Library as part of the oral history program on February 22, 1977.

[End of Interview]